

LOUISIANA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 8, 2008

Louisiana Workforce Commission News Update

La. Workforce Commission processing unemployment benefit payments

BATON ROUGE -The restoration of power and networking services to the Louisiana Workforce Commission (LWC) is enabling the agency to process unemployment benefit payments today for the first time since Hurricane Gustav struck last week.

People who submitted continuing claims before the storm will be paid by Thursday or Friday. They do not need to call to check on the status of those claims. They will be processed automatically.

People who submit continuing claims today to cover their unemployment last week also will be paid by Thursday or Friday. These people should file their continuing claims by using the LWC Easy Call system. The system has the capacity to handle the high volume of calls expected during the hurricane recovery period.

Everyone who is already receiving unemployment benefits also has received instructions for using this system, along with a list of 35 or so Easy Call phone numbers. People using the system can dial any of the Easy Call numbers in the state, but a local phone number is available for the vast majority of residents.

Effective Monday, Sept. 8, people will be able to file continued claims and new claims online at www.laworks.net. People who file over the Web can avoid any delays associated with high volumes of calls to the LWC's toll-free line.

LWC urges everyone with continued claims to use the Easy Call system or the Web. This will relieve much of the pressure on the call center and should greatly reduce hold times and the number of people who are getting busy signals when they call to file new claims.

We urge everyone who is trying to file a new claim for unemployment benefits to be patient until the high call volume subsides. These people should note that their payments will not be significantly delayed by the difficulties in getting through to the call center. The earliest week for which they can be compensated is the week ending Sept. 13, and their payments will begin in early October. This schedule is the same as it would have been without the disruption caused by Hurricane Gustav.

LWC has taken extraordinary steps to work around that disruption, including greatly increasing its call center capacity and extending its hours. Those measures began before the storm and will continue until normal service levels are restored. By later today, our call center capacity will be nearly five times its usual level and by late Tuesday it should be about 10 times its usual level.

The call center's toll-free number is 1-866-783-5567. It is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily until normal service is restored. Business and Career Solution Centers around the state also can help people file claims.

For the latest information on the recovery from Hurricane Gustav, visit emergency.louisiana.gov or call the state's emergency hotline at 1-866-288-2484 to listen to a recorded message with the most up-to-date information.